

NICODEMUS:

OR, A

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TREATISE

ON THE

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FEAR OF MAN.

WRITTEN in GERMAN

By AUGUST HERMAN FRANCK

ABRIDGED

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*To all Ministers and Teachers in Churches
and Schools, Grace, Mercy, and Peace from
God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ,
in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.*

Dearly beloved Brethren,

GIVE me leave, who am the least of all the
Servants of Jesus Christ, for the love
wherewith God hath loved us in his Son, to dedicate
to you the following Treatise. For though I be the
meanest member in the spiritual body of Christ (if
so much may be allowed me) yet I am thereby made
partaker of the life, spirit, and power residing in
him, as our blessed head. If there be any thing
herein conformable to the mind of our great Shep-
herd, and proceeding from the energy of his Spirit,
why should it not be readily received? And if,
after a true spiritual trial thereof, you find any
thing faulty or imperfect, commend it to the mercy
of our great Shepherd, to correct in me by the
gracious influence of his Spirit.

I do not offer this as a piece of great learning.
Indeed, the plain truth of my God, set forth in its
natural lustre, and the least communication of his
power affecting the heart, is infinitely more va-
luable to me than all the learning of this world.
And my only boasting in the Lord is this, that I
have betaken myself to that school wherein the
highest wisdom is, to know Jesus Christ, and him
crucified. And though I, who have scarce learned
the first elements thereof, have the boldness to repeat
this my lesson in the hearing of all, yet ought it

not to be deemed an effect of pride; but the love of my neighbour constraineth me.

My soul hath been many times grieved at the apparent corruption, as of men in general, so of our Order in particular; and more especially when I saw that the fear of man is become the epidemical distemper of our Teachers. When I reflect on the one hand, with what spirit, with what joy, with what undaunted courage and boldness the ancient Servants of God set aside all regard of man, and delivered as the Ambassadors of the Lord, their message fully and plainly, though it exposed them to the evident hazard of their lives; and on the other, how gently and softly we go about it now, and how little we manifest the truth to the conscience of every man: when I moreover considered, how much they suffered with Christ their Lord, for the sake of their testimony; and how the most of us take care to preach so smoothly, as not to incur the least shadow of their sufferings: the difference between us and them appeared so exceedingly great, that I could not but be astonished at it.

Brethren, I speak with plainness and simplicity. When our Lord and Master was in this world, he was so far from desiring the riches, honours, or pleasures of it, that he was indeed the poorest and most despised among men: entirely spending all the days of his humiliation, in procuring our salvation. And it is he that tells us, Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. We therefore ought to be so many shining lights by our hearty denial of all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world; and by employing our lives entirely in the assistance of our neighbours. But if, on the contrary, we seek worldly things, then we depart from our glorious

rious pattern; neither is there any thing that doth more effectually deprive us of the blessing of God upon our calling. For, sure it is, the more we are concerned for honour, profit, or ease, the less shall we be concerned to promote the good of our neighbour. And as long as our minds are not wholly conformable to the mind of our great Shepherd, it is impossible he should be well pleased with us; for He trieth the hearts and reins. On the contrary, did we desire nothing in the world, we should not fear it.

Did we duly consider, that there is a day before us when we must give an account to the great Bishop of our souls, whether, according to his example, we had nothing else in our eye but the salvation of mankind, should we not apply ourselves to our duty with another kind of fervor than we have hitherto done? Should we not more effectually clear ourselves from all suspicion of either fearing or desiring any thing in this world? Should we not be more earnest to admonish every one in particular? Should we not wrestle more in our prayers for them? Should we not, as soon as any good desire appeared in any, more readily lend him our helping hand, that the spark of grace might be blown up into a flame? Should not our outward conversation be more holy and consequently more edifying? Verily, my brethren, I fear we have reason to be ashamed, when we read what one saith, "A Christian ought to be so enkindled and all-flaming with divine love, and both inwardly and outwardly so conformable to God, that whenever any one came to him, he might hear nothing from him but God: and his heart and mind ought to be so fixed on him by burning love, and so ready in all things faithfully to obey his will, that such as visited him, though with cold and lukewarm hearts,

might be heated, and set on fire by him. As we see cold and dead coals are kindled, when they are put to glowing ones."

I have opened my mouth, my Brethren, and addressed you with the simplicity of a child, and am very willing to appear mean in your eyes; only despise not the truth, which is not mine, but my Lord's and Saviour's. I am not ashamed to acknowledge that I count not myself to have apprehended, or to be already perfect. But this I say (my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, which also the righteous Judge will testify for me at the great day) that since I have found grace in the eyes of my Lord, to perceive my own misery, and the narrow way to escape from it, all my thoughts and endeavours have been bent, in the faithfulness of my heart, to continue therein, to pursue it more eagerly day by day, and as far as possible, to direct men to it. I neither despise nor envy any one of you that are of the same function with me. Nay, I know many among you to whom I think myself unworthy to do the meanest service. But I know many likewise, whose conversation is not at all conformable to the pattern Christ hath set us. And for these I heartily pray, that God would shew them the things that belong to their eternal peace. Neither is my heart in the least incensed against them that most unjustly slander and reproach me. But I compassionate them, since we must all one day appear before the same Judge: for my part I cannot call black white, nor take him for a follower of Christ, and a pattern of his flock, in whom I find nothing of the mind that was in Christ.

If any thing has been vouchsafed to me, it is this (wherein I heartily rejoice) that I have been made, though in a very low degree, partaker of the sufferings

ferings of Christ. And it is the greatest comfort to me, that the men of this world speak all manner of evil of me falsely, loading me with censures and accusations, the groundlessness whereof the Lord will discover at that day.

Let us all, my Brethren, think of this great day, and so even our accompts against it, that we may then appear with joy and confidence: let us cast away all care, but this only. Let us drop all unprofitable contest, and with united hands carry on the work of the Lord, being heartily glad to see his glory advanced, be it by ourselves or others. And I beseech God from the bottom of my heart, to influence you all with a rich measure of his Holy Spirit, to sanctify you to himself, and to pour his transcendent blessing upon all your planting and watering! The spirit of love and of truth keep all your hearts, and lead them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, who alone is able to give that true peace, which the world cannot give.

October 26, 1731.

AUGUST HERMAN FRANCK,

NICODEMUS,



N I C O D E M U S.

C H A P I.

Of the Nature and Causes of the Fear of Man.

THE fear of man, in things pertaining to God, is a most heinous vice, and a kind of idolatry, whereby we think, speak, or do some evil, or decline thinking, speaking, or doing some good out of some sort of consideration of men, or apprehension of their displeasure. Now the more there is of this fear still cleaving to believers, the more dangerous is the condition of their souls.

The causes hereof are either internal or external: the internal are chiefly these:

1. Unbelief, which is the root of all vices.
2. The love of the world, and the things of the world, and the want of self-denial; which makes us fear men would prejudice us in our reputation, estate, or ease, if we simply followed the word of God.
3. False humility, which is swayed more by the authority of men, than by the word of God, and prompts us to refer all things to the judgment of others, as understanding them better than ourselves.
4. An eager desire of visible success in all our undertakings; whereas we ought to rest satisfied with an inward victory, that is, with having kept a good conscience toward God.

5. Want

5. Want of experience in the ways of God, which makes us hesitate in difficult cases, and indisposes the soul to rely upon God, fearing lest he should let us fail or miscarry in them, or that it would be presumption and tempting of God, to cast ourselves wholly upon him. This proceeds from our not having sufficiently learned how dear they are to God that entirely trust in him; and what powerful assistance he affords to accomplish his own work in them.

6. Neglect of prayer, which not only prevents our obtaining a full conquest over the fear of man, but likewise drives us down farther into the stream of hypocrisy.

The external causes are chiefly these :

1. The tyranny of men in power, who under pretence of preserving the public peace, fetter the consciences both of teachers and hearers.

2. The forwardness of our Universities in dubbing of Heretics: for they no sooner perceive any breakings forth of true Christianity, but they are sure, out of their great zeal, to cast a slur upon it, by giving it an ill name.

3. The examples and specious reasonings of those, who are bound down by the fear of man.

4. Wife and children, that by their importunate way of arguing, and unbelieving tattle and clamour, weary out and overcome many.

5. The esteem we have already gained in the world. Those especially who are in any eminent post, and find it hard to give up their darling reputation, and suffer reproach with the people of God.

6. Too great intimacy with the children of this world; particularly, with great and honourable men: who, under pretence of hearty love and kindness, are always cautioning us not to venture too far.

Lastly, the neglect of frequent conversation with true believers, who walk in the power of faith.

C H A P II.

Of the Signs and Effects of the Fear of Man.

1. **A** Fearful man is not easily convinced of the truth: and though it be laid before him with the clearest evidence, yet he starts many doubts and scruples about it, lest if he should confess it too roundly, he should be hated, persecuted, or reputed a Heretic.

2. He is never so busy in starting objections, as in cases that most tend to the glory of God.

3. When he is convinced of the truth, he will not confess it before men: or if he do, it is only among the lovers of truth. But before the enemies thereof he conceals or denies it, or talks so dubiously about it, as to leave them uncertain whether he believes it or no; at least he takes care so to order his words, as to be able to give them always a handsome turn, and so to come off without trouble. If he lives in a place where truth is professed, he owns it open mouthed: but if he comes to another place, he finds many difficulties in the point, so that he resolves to halt between both, and leave it undetermined.

4. When he finds he cannot avoid owning the truth, yet he takes care so to limit and pinch it, that it may appear tolerable even to the enemies of truth.

5. A fearful man will at last break out into an avowed confession of truth: but it is when he finds himself well backed with human authority; that is, when a person of unspotted reputation, and great learning, hath asserted the same before him. Accordingly he is more careful to arm himself with a fine train of human testimonies, than with the word of God itself; and thinks he has a right so to do, because he sees the cheerful confessors of truth have sometimes stopped the mouths of their shameless adversaries with such arguments.

6. When some good work is to be done, he doth not undertake it with a simple reliance on the living

living God: but when he finds good patrons on his side, he at last sets about it. Yet when he sees the storm arise, and the waves beat, he gives way, and so loses all he had gained.

7. He always finds something to blame in the behaviour of faithful labourers. Sometimes he fears, "they go too far." Sometimes, finding nothing to tax in the thing itself, he blames the manner of doing it. When he finds nothing else to cavil at, he cries, the work is not well timed: thus he always sees some fault; though indeed there is none but his own want of faith.

8. He is very apt to believe any false reports against the faithful children of God; and because his own heart fails, he is very forward in warning them to take heed to themselves; thus by his prudence damping and stifling the cheerfulness of their faith.

9. He does not love that a Minister should make too plain and particular an application of his sermons, or shew too great earnestness in his function, or profession of Christianity.

10. A fearful man is easily moved to envy; especially when he sees those that are young acting cheerfully in faith; and cries, "That is none of his business, but must be left to those of more knowledge and experience."

11. He either himself exposes as presumptuous, stubborn, self-conceited, proud and pharisaical, those who, with a free and child-like spirit, break through all opposition: or at least, sits on the bench when they are thus condemned, and consents to the unjust sentence pronounced against them.

12. A fearful Minister reproves common people boldly; but when he is to speak to great and honourable persons, his mouth is gagged.

13. The pulpit is a fearful Preacher's stronghold: but when he is to speak face to face, and to bear witness to the truth by saying, "Thou art the man," then he is very supple and complaisant.

14. When

14. When he hears profane, loose, or foolish talking, he holds his tongue, and when it comes from great men, he graces it with a smile.

15. Above all things, a fearful man cannot abide to be singular.

16. Sometimes he desires to do something to the glory of God; but he soon confronts the thought with "What will people say?" And then fairly drops it.

17. He cautiously shuns frequent and familiar conversation with the members of Christ that are despised by the world. Or if he be willing to converse with them by night and in secret, yet he cares not to appear with them in public. He rather appoints some certain place to meet them, where it may not be taken notice of.

18. A fearful Preacher makes it his business in his public discourses, to bring in something against Enthusiasm and Fanaticism; and then he thinks he may venture to speak the truth: Which is true enough. For the world takes it for granted, That he means it as they apprehend it, that is, as spoken against those, on whom they falsely bestow those names.

19. A fearful man rejoiceth for a time, while the light of truth shines upon him; but as soon as he is called to account for it, he is sore afraid, makes many excuses, and by all manner of shifts and evasions, endeavours to extricate himself, and to get rid of the suspicion of it.

20. Instead of reproving his neighbour, he says, "God is so merciful, that he does not doubt but he will himself reclaim him in due time."

21. When he is to press the inward truth of Christianity, he says, "It is too high for them: if he is to enforce any thing of outward behaviour, he accounts it a little thing, or else says, "We must not begin at outward things."

Of the Mischiefs caused by the Fear of Man.

1. **M**ANY thousands of souls are thereby kept from a true conversion: because they dare not suffer the knowledge of the truth to shine upon them in its full strength, but hold it imprisoned, as it were, by manifold shifts and pretences.

2. Many who are already converted are hereby hindered from growth in holiness: as they deprive themselves of many opportunities (which they greatly need) to strengthen and edify themselves in God, for this fear makes them avoid the conversation of those who are most able to build them up in the faith; and run into many other sins against the dictates of their own conscience.

Again, as a free and ready confession of the truth, highly advances a man in faith and love, so the denying or hiding it keeps him quite down, and hinders him from attaining the power of the Spirit. Many know not what the reason is, why they advance so slowly in spiritual growth. It is plainly this, the fear of man lurking within, eats out the vigour and activity of the life of grace. God, it is certain, does infinitely abound in mercy, and would willingly every day pour out new blessings upon us. But a fearful man is not receptive of them. He doth not act in singleness of heart. He dares not trust in God, and God therefore cannot fill him with the fulness of his graces.

3. When Ministers, in particular, are unable to overcome the fear of man, they grow dejected and heartless in the discharge of their function, and scarce know themselves what or how they ought to speak. They become listless in all their performances: so that the most excellent gifts which God has bestowed upon them, become altogether fruitless, and what good might have been done is either never attempted or left unfinished. Indeed it cannot be expected that any one enslaved to this

fear, should ever by his cold endeavours, thoroughly reform any abuse of long continuance. The fear of man is always for maintaining old customs: and while every one is afraid of innovation, abuses are authorized more and more, and all things proceed from bad to worse.

And though there were two or more such Ministers in the same place, they will perform nothing worthy of their calling: nay, the one hindereth the other from the faithful discharge of his pastoral duty. Yea, it would be better for many to have for their fellow-labourer, one that was openly wicked, who might perhaps, by his enormities, force the truth from them, than a timorous *Nicodemus*, who by shunning it himself, teaches them to shun the light.

And such as the Minister is, such are commonly the hearers. If he therefore be afraid, how will his hearers ever be excited to a true cheerfulness of faith? And those of them, who, by the grace of God, are freed from this base bondage, can never have any confidence in their Teacher, till he is disengaged from that servile spirit. Many Ministers wonder why the true children of God have so little confidence in them: not considering this plain reason of it, that their flock never saw in them the least proof of a good Shepherd, who readily exposes himself to any sufferings, yea, *lays down his life for his sheep*.

Such servants as these, God will not fail in due time, to crown with success. He will manifest his glory in them, and make bare his arm before them. But there is nothing of all this, where unbelief gained admittance, and where the honour due to God from and before all men, is not undauntedly rendered to him. For a fearful man trusts God no farther than his own poor reason carries him. When any thing crosses that, he presently giveth way; and therefore, wanting the courage of a lively faith, he can never behold the glory of God.

41. When

4. When the well-wishers to religion see those who know the truth, or at least ought to do so, backward in owning it, they are not a little encouraged to play the hypocrite themselves, instead of freely and boldly avowing their Master. And it often happens, that by the fearfulness of one eminent man, thousands are infected with the spirit of hypocrisy and dissimulation.

5. On the other hand, when the adversaries of truth, see them that love it, shun the light, it strengthens them in their bad cause, concluding, that if they were in the right, they would have no need to fear, and as, if you resist the devil, he will flee from you, so the reverse is full as true. The more you fear, and give way to the devil and his instruments, the more will they pursue and press upon you.

6. In a word, The fear of man, is the general bane both of city and country. Our superiors would appoint good Ministers and Magistrates; but they fear displeasing this or the other man, or set of men. They who should speak when a wicked Minister is ordained, or Officer is recommended, hold their tongues through fear. In the Courts of Judicature, this fear prevents justice, condemns the innocent, clears the guilty, bereaves widows and orphans of their right, and leaves the injured and oppressed without remedy. And what does it profit a man who is himself a slave to this fear, that he is sensible of the general corruption? It only exposes him to the more pain. Being unwilling to break either with the world or God, he is looked upon as an unfaithful Steward by both; and he endures far more trouble and anxiety, than the breaking through with a ready presence of faith would have cost him. He finds no joyful, filial assurance in prayer. The word of God has no relish with him. He never attains to the true communion of Saints, and when he should comfort and strengthen others by exhorting them in the power of God, he rather drives them to fear, and quenches the Holy Spirit in them. Thus he

goes on without any spiritual experience, contenting himself with the bare letter and shadows of Christianity, and a few sounding words, but being in the mean time void of soul and life, of spirit and power. And so falling at last into a state of carnal security, he carries others also along with him; often to the utter denying the truth, and precipitating himself into final destruction.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Excuses that are usually made for the fear of Man.

AS soon as we begin with true humility to acknowledge the fear of man, as a great and most heinous evil, and accordingly to watch and pray, and strive against it, there is hope we may overcome. But there are very few that will acknowledge it; the very most when charged therewith, labour to hide it with various excuses; some of which are so precious, that they blind the eyes of many, so that they approve their conduct, and praise their saying.

1. "Should I act thus, I should soon be called to an account for it." Well; but should this hinder a faithful servant from executing his master's orders with all sincerity? "But I shall be put to charges and trouble, nay perhaps be turned out of my livelihood." Perhaps not; God is well able to protect thee. But if trouble do overtake thee, still have faith in God, and thou shalt not be a looser for his sake. God is a faithful Lord and Master. Be it only thy care to be a faithful servant. Whatever thou loosest in his cause, he will restore it to thee an hundred fold. Happy art thou when thou sufferest for conscience-sake. Though man cast thee off, God will take thee up. But if thou art unwilling to lose thy place for the sake of a good conscience, it is plain thou servest thy belly and not God.

2. "But

2. "But I have a wife and children to take care of." Hear then what the Lord saith unto thee. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." True it is, that he who provideth not for his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel. But God's honour must not suffer one jot under pretence of providing for thy family. Thou mayest not, on that pretence, go out of the way of the commandment, to the right hand or to the left. Thou must do neither less nor more, than if thou hadst done: only learn what meaneth, *Seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

3. "But we must not pull down sufferings upon our own heads, or willfully run into them. Neither must thou be afraid of suffering: as long as this flinching from the cross is in thee, thy faith is not right. When a good thing cannot be done without suffering, thou art absolutely bound to take it up. It is better to suffer all things, than to have an evil conscience: trouble not thyself, but do thou heartily the will of God. He will not lay upon thee more than thou art able to bear. Thou representest things to thyself worse than indeed they now are. Thou art afraid of men: but glorify the Lord God in thy heart, and they will be afraid of thee.

4. "Why, we do what we can." Thou canst not do any thing of thyself; Christ alone doth all that is good in and by thee. But who can boast that he does as much as the spirit of Christ enables him to do? He that weighs all things well, must needs acknowledge, he cannot answer to God, for the many things he hath omitted, which he might have overcome by the power of faith, and which will appear in judgment against him. At the beginning very little appears possible; but if we go on boldly relying upon God, we shall find ourselves supported in doing greater things, yea, able to do *all things through Christ who strengtheneth us.*

5. "If such as are leading men, who ought to be foremost in good undertakings, would but break the ice, we would readily follow them; but we do not care to be the first beginners, as if we were better than them." Do as a servant that carries the torch before his master, and yet does not think himself better than his master. The kingdom of God did not come first to men of the first rank, or to them who made the greatest figure in the world. When thou art to receive thy reward, wilt thou refuse to receive it, till thy superior be paid first? In the kingdom of God there must be no dispute about precedency. Let not therefore the unbelief of others keep thee back in thy race; knowing this, that if thou art convinced of the truth, and yet actest not according to thy conviction, God will certainly punish thy disobedience, though thou shouldest appeal to Pope or Emperor.

6. "But I am no Minister, I have no business to take care of men's souls." No! Art thou not a Christian (though not a Minister) and is it not the business, the bounden duty of every Christian, to endeavour to bring his neighbour back into the right way, whenever he sees him wandering in vice and delusion? Is not every Christian one anointed with the Spirit of Christ? who consequently is bound to tread in his steps, by making his whole life one continued endeavour to save all men from the wrath to come? Thou mayest not indeed take upon thee to administer the sacraments, to cast out of the Church, or receive the penitent into it again; these are the peculiar offices of those who are so called of God as was Aaron: but thou must at the peril of thy salvation, follow the example of Christ as well as they. Thou, as well as they, must observe all the laws of God; especially that of doing good unto all men. Spiritual good above all; since it is not to Ministers alone, but to all men that he hath said, *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

7. "How

7. "However, we must use prudence." True; but there are two sorts of it; one, that is, from above, the other from beneath. The former of these is unreprouceable, and a most precious gift of the Most High. But that which is from beneath hath the appearance indeed of wisdom, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. Where the fear of the Lord is not continually before the eyes, there the foundation of it is already laid. Where faith is weak, there she raises herself, when love grows cold, then is she strong. She informs us how to please God without displeasing the world; to follow Christ, and yet avoid the cross. As long as the kingdom of God consists in words only, she cannot utter all she has to say. But when it is to be demonstrated in power, then she has recourse to many evasions, and cautions others (out of hearty good-will) not to venture too far. Then she jumbles light and darkness together; she shifts and turns every way to keep the cross from her shoulders. She swims with the stream, and cares not to converse with those who suffer reproach for Christ's sake. She keeps on indeed the appearance of godliness as long as possible; and yet holdeth her tongue where the children of God are condemned; nay, sometimes joins in pronouncing their sentence. She does much evil that good may come of it. But who is able to describe all the faces of this horrible monster, which is come up out of the bottomless pit? It is true we must use prudence; but consider well which sort of prudence thou wilt use. Yea, set thyself before this glass, that thou mayest know by which of these thou hast squared thy life and actions hitherto.

8. "But we must stay a little; another time may do better: we may do more good by a little delay." Where has God given thee leave to delay till the next moment, what may be done at this? To let slip any opportunity, in order to reserve thyself for some more favourable time? St. Paul bids us redeem time, or (more exactly according to the

the Greek) buy up every opportunity, i. e. lay hold of it, as soon as ever it offers. Reserving thyself for a more convenient season, proceeds purely from false prudence. This reserve accustoms thee to hypocrisy; it continually strengthens the fear from which it flows, and will hinder thee from ever meeting with an opportunity to exert the true power of faith.

9. "To undertake a thing without being able to effect it, does more hurt than good; therefore it is better not to begin." Thou dost well to compute the charge of building before thou beginnest to build the tower. But whence wilt thou procure the charge? From thy own ability? No; that can never reach it. Begin thy work with full reliance upon God, and draw thy supplies from Almighty goodness and wisdom, and by this means thou wilt be enabled to accomplish at this cost, the work once begun.

Or if God, for holy reasons should not prosper thy endeavours, it will be a comfort to thee that thou hast done thy part; and thy conscience will be more easy, than if thou had distrusted God, and so never set about it. Perhaps he trieth thee hereby, and though it has not succeeded now, it may at another time. Perhaps thy very endeavours may stir up many to an imitation of thy zeal. But if thou shouldst be disappointed in all thy good purposes, shouldst thou conclude, that thy work of love had been in vain? Examine thyself, whether thy desire of open success in all things, be not the effect of great pride lurking within? Be thou satisfied with the inward victory, a true Christian can never be deprived of, which consists in thy continuing unwearied in the patience of hope.

10. "But we cannot do all at once." Thou unprofitable servant, shouldst thou therefore bury thy talent in a napkin, and do nothing at all? Thou knowest not what thou canst do, or rather, what God can do by thee. If thou wilt but lay aside the fear of man, and set out boldly in his strength,

strength, God is able to do for and by thee exceedingly abundantly, above all that thou canst ask or think.

11. "However we ought to go fair and softly to work, and do what good we can, considerately and by degrees." Ay, this is something indeed. If we could but persuade the devil to go fair and softly too! But alas, *he walketh about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* What hast thou then to do, but to resist him stedfast in the faith, and to press on in the power of the Holy Ghost? The Devil laughs at all thy fair and softly: give him but time, and he will not lose a moment. And the blood of those whom thy softness hath destroyed will God require at thy hands.

12. "But an edge too sharp is easily turned." If you would infer hence, that we should not contend earnestly for the faith, that it is not always good to be zealously affected in a good thing: or that we may sometimes hide our zeal, wink at the faults of our neighbours, or otherwise dissemble with them: this is all false prudence; this is directly contrary to the cross of Christ. It is but just that we shew love and meekness toward all men; especially when we declare to them the overflowing kindness of God. But at the same time we must use all possible earnestness, lest our love be made a cloak for our wickedness. And whenever we do not, unbelief and the fear of man are at the bottom of our hearts; however we labour by these specious words to excuse our being neither hot nor cold.

13. "But it is visible what great disorders arise when people are too forward." It is very possible that young and unexperienced Christians, may at first make some false steps. And this mote in their eye, you presently discern; nay, and perhaps triumph over them. Take heed to thyself: we ought to bear with the faults of beginners, with great gentleness and compassionate love; and if we think ourselves more knowing than they, to set them right in the spirit of meekness. But God looks

looks not on things with thy eyes. There is a vast difference between one that is still spiritually dead, and one that has recovered life from God, though he is still weak and encompassed with infirmity. Thou who art stronger, draw not back because he is weak. Break thou thyself through those impediments, which he could not, and shew others by thy example, how to serve God, with more purity and wisdom.

14. "By too open a declaration, we may hinder a great deal of good that otherwise might be done; nay, overturn all: whereas by a prudent concealing of ourselves, we may do a great deal of service." This is nothing but another piece of false prudence: for though it is true that an understanding man finds a time for silence as well as for speaking, yet a true Christian ought to trust in God, that he will so far bless the good he aims at, as that no other good undertaking will be hindered by it. If thou hast not this stedfast confidence in God, the devil will be sure to delude thee at pleasure; always representing such phantoms, as will make thee let go what thou hast in thy hand, to catch at a shadow.

It is matter of wonder that there are many, who, though they cannot name so much as one man whom they have really converted to God, yet will not in any one particular vigorously break through opposition, "for fear of overturning all." Al! Why thou hadst never yet built up any thing, which can be overthrown. But if God hath done some good by thee already, then I doubt not but he will do more. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee," is his promise to thee and all his servants. And with this promise every true servant of God, may bid defiance to the world. Remember, to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin. Let us but follow this rule with singleness of heart, and resign to God the care of what is to come. For no good can ever be better advanced, than when one wedge drives

drives another, and we daily grow more bold, in heartily promoting the cause of Christ, and the good of his church.

15. "But we must have a care of getting an ill name; for then we should do no good at all:" this is the grand excuse for the fear of man, and it is at the bottom of almost all the rest. This is what the men of prudence never fail to urge in their defence; and in this they suppose themselves impregnable. "If I get an ill name, I can do no good." Hast thou learnt this in the word of God? Hath Christ taught thee this? Saith he not, *Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company; yea when they shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Behold your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets.* To persuade men therefore that the reproach of Christ is an hindrance to the course of the gospel, is a true fetch of the devil's, by which he endeavours to make void the cross of Christ: whereas, on the contrary, every one of us must most certainly believe that he can do nothing at all to the purpose, so long as he refuses to wear the badge of Christ.

"Yes; thou thinkest in thy heart, by my being reserved, and not exposing myself, some may be won." Thou wilt only make hypocrites like thyself; men that are vainly puffed up by a little knowledge, and yet ashamed of Christ and his word, and unwilling to suffer any persecution for the cross of Christ. But if once thou canst resolve, with unshaken presence of mind, to break loose from the bondage of fearfulness, and thus to evidence thy faith, by taking on thee the reproach of Christ, then *Others waxing confident by thy sufferings, will be more emboldened to speak without fear.*

"But we must not expose ourselves: we must not suffer ourselves to be made fools of by others." We must not, I grant, do anything which is foolish

foolish, i. e. contrary to God's word: But it is the devil's suggestion, that we should expose ourselves by directing our actions precisely according to it. Here it is, that St. Paul's caution will do us great service. *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* Is it not a shame, when the Lord of glory was taken for a madman, and one possessed by the Devil, for thee to be highly esteemed of the world? By this thou givest evidence against thyself, that thou dost not belong to Christ, that thou knowest not the dignity of his cross; and how then wilt thou be able to rejoice with him? It neither can nor must be otherwise. Thou must be looked upon as a fool in the world, if thou wilt be a disciple of Christ. It will not fail thee an hair's breadth, high and low, teachers and hearers, must all alike be censured by the world, when once they earnestly turn themselves to God. For as soon as they cease to be conformed to the fashionable way of the world, the world is immediately offended, and begins to scoff and rail, charging them with fanaticism, singularity, pharasaical hypocrisy, and what not? Loading them with a thousand lies and calumnies. And he that is afraid of this reproach from the world, must continue an hypocrite as long as he lives.

16. "Yet though we must not be conformed to the world, we must become all things to all men," as St. Paul testifies himself he did, "*that by all means he might gain some.*" St. Paul gave sufficient proof of his being an undaunted workman, to whom God had given not the Spirit of fear, but the Spirit of power: but what hast thou to shew for thyself? Worldly-minded men can become all to all too; but from another principle, by other means, and for quite another end. Canst thou express the bold alacrity of St. Paul, who was not afraid to withstand St. Peter himself to the face, when the fear of man had made him play the hypocrite, so that others also were carried away by his

his dissimulation? It is certainly a great piece of wisdom, so to become weak with the weak, as not to lose any thing of our own strength; so to become all to all, as to stand free from all manner of hypocrisy. Examine then thyself, whether the serpent, with his prudence, hath not perverted thy mind from the simplicity of Christ. There is no cloak that more plausibly covers the fear of man than this; therefore look to it, that above all things thou dispatch this enemy.

Neither excuse thy conforming to the world in rich clothes, banquets, dancing, plays, and the like, by saying, "I take no delight in these trifles; but I submit to them, that I may have the more power over them that do:" this is one of the fruits of our modern religion, raised on maxims of state-policy; but if we bring it to the test, it is altogether inconsistent with *the truth, as it is in Jesus*. "But you are for taking away the abuse of these things, and letting the use remain." The true children of God, who are crucified to the world, cannot find the least true use in them. When they would avoid or prevent any evil, or do any good, either to their own souls, or their neighbour, they have no need of the Devil's rattles, but fly to their God, and commit their whole cause to his direction. They rest themselves, while they use only such measures as he directs, in full confidence that he will do what is best: and they enjoy even the necessary refreshments of their bodies for no other end, but to spend the strength received thereby, in humble acknowledgment and child-like thankfulness, and to renew the vigour of their soul and body for the service of their neighbours.

C H A P. V.

Of the Means whereby we may be delivered from the Fear of Man.

1. **T**HE first and most necessary of all means is, a constant and earnest endeavour to free ourselves from the most dangerous deceitfulness of

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our own hearts. Nothing is a more fatal hindrance of a man's salvation, than the false conceit that he is already a Christian, and so has no more need of laying again the foundation of repentance, or of the first conversion to God.

There is no error which it is more difficult to remove than this: especially in a Minister; who having undertaken to shew others the way to heaven, presupposes that he is himself therein. And because he sees but little difference between himself and his hearers, and knows nothing of a saving change of heart, he by wholesale takes them all for Christians; and, like a blind Pharisee, reproves nothing but outward vices. His own inward part being not yet cleansed, he cannot awaken others out of their slumber, and bring them over from their false-imaginary faith, to a true, living one, working by love. And by means of these unconverted Preachers, destitute of all experimental knowledge of spiritual things, whole Parishes, Cities and Countries are countenanced in their carnal security.

Now when God is pleased to send forth faithful witnesses of his truth, to awaken men out of their spiritual slumber, then is the devil most busy to second this security with the fear of man; one fearing this, another that, so that both together choak the truth of God in the heart. The best advice that can be given to a man in this case is, that he thoroughly search into his own condition, according to the tenor of the word of God, that he may not be deluded with vain hopes. By this means he may come to a full assurance of the state of his soul, and feel the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is a child of God: but till he will thus search into the bottom of his heart, he cannot be freed from this fear. Nor will he be able to make a right use of any means at all that may be offered him: for without the power of the Holy Ghost, which till then he cannot have, a man will never get so far as to eye God only in all his actions: and till he does this, it is impossible

impossible he should discharge his duty without the fear of man.

2. As the want of self-denial is one of the chief causes of the fear of man, it will be absolutely necessary, in order to the subduing it, to labour after a true self-denying frame of spirit: for as long as we fear the loss of our ease, or goods, or honour, or greatness in the world, so long we shall be loath, by a close following the steps of our Lord, to incur the displeasure of men; till therefore, a man, "*renounceth himself he cannot be his disciple.*" But when once we seek no honour, but what cometh from God, nor any pleasure, but that of doing his will, we shall find it easy to confess the truth, with undauntedness, both in word and deed.

"Let him then, who will come after Christ, *deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow him.*" And he that begins to be a proficient in this, will find the fear of man vanishing of itself. For why do we fear men? For no other reason, but we are afraid of the cross. And why do we fear the cross? Because we understand not the infinite good that lies hid in it. Because we apprehend not, that since the fall, whatever is really good, must spring up under the cross.

3. And that we may never be weary of bearing it, or faint in our minds, we should frequently and deeply meditate on the vanity, and even nothingness of this world, this idle dream, this vanishing shadow; on the nothingness of man himself; a worm, a vapour, a leaf driven by the wind; even in his best estate, *walking in a vain shew, and disquieting himself in vain*; on the glorious Majesty of the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, and the unspeakable joys that are at his right-hand for evermore; on the several degrees of that glory, which shall be proportioned to our several degrees of obedience; and in particular, on the mighty rewards annexed to the denial of ourselves, and cheerfully taking up our cross.

4. The servants of Christ find this also a sure means to conquer, when they are assaulted by the fear of man, to enter immediately into deep meditation on the bitter passion of our Lord. This is the antidote which St. Peter prescribes, *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try every one of you; but rejoice inasmuch as ye are made partakers of the sufferings of Christ*, Eph. iv. 12.—And so St. Paul, *consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. And again, We always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of him also might be made manifest in our mortal body.*

This is the true apostolic mind, which few apprehend; but those who do apprehend and obtain it, tread in the same steps, and declare themselves servants of the living God in true cheerfulness of faith. “*They are not afraid of the terror of men, but sanctify the Lord God in their hearts: having determined to know and regard nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*”

5. Add to this, the consideration of those faithful companions of Christ, mentioned in the scriptures as well as other histories. This was the way St. Paul took to encourage them that were weak in faith, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews; which being an excellent abstract of the whole Old Testament, ought to be more especially pondered by us, and applied for the support of our faith, and in all outward and inward temptations. The histories likewise of the primitive, as well as later Martyrs, were they more attentively considered, would contribute much toward our attaining a true boldness of faith, so necessary for our christian warfare.

But chiefly (I repeat it again) *Look ye unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith.* Consider him, or (as the Greek word properly signifies) make a comparison, between what Christ hath suffered, and what ye suffer. Consider what proportion there is between the two; for sure it is, if you will be his followers, you must be ever determined
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and prepared to resist even unto blood, striving against sin.

Now This it was that so powerfully inspired St. Paul, to expose himself to all manner of sufferings. For the mark he always had in his eye was, To know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. And St. Peter, from the same ground, saith, If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. Christ himself also gives us the same instruction: Remember the word which I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; wherefore, if any man would in good earnest be rid of the fear of man, let him eye continually the example and image of Christ; and know assuredly, he cannot be happier than when he cometh up to the nearest conformity with his suffering crucified Lord. If his love be sincere, it will kindle in his heart an ardent desire to be made like unto him; and this desire will dispel all the fear of man, because it makes the cross, which is so bitter to the flesh, delightful to the spirit, so that it can no more hinder his drinking gladly the cup which his Father hath given him.

Nay, St. Paul assures us, that a man not only overcomes thereby, but that he is more than conqueror; intimating, that by this victory he gains an inconceivable advantage over all the sufferings that can befall him for the gospel's sake. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword: nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors. Nor does he stop here, but expresses the undaunted cheerfulness of his heart yet more emphatically; I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, or things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from

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the love of God.—Let us, dear brethren, in like manner, press on in spirit into the living and powerful fellowship of Jesus Christ, so that we may *live no more, but he may live in us, and the life which we now live in the flesh we may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.* Thus all fear will soon vanish out of our heart, and the joyful Spirit of Christ will fill up the room it had there, and make us grow in strength, comfort and encourage us in all our combats, and afford us a continual train of victories.

6. Let us then apply ourselves to God in earnest prayer, that he would be pleased to vouchsafe us this Spirit, even *the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* This is not of us, but the free gift of God, which gift he is most ready to impart to those who heartily pray for it. Let us then ask, that we may receive; and more especially at such times, when we are called to act any thing that requires some exerting of the power of faith, let us have a care to do nothing according to our own fancy, but in the first place, lay it open before God in prayer, and then set upon it armed with the whole armour of God.

7. Now as Jesus Christ is he that can most certainly deliver us from all fear of man, so none can teach us better than he himself, by what means we must fight against it. And this he hath carefully done, especially in the latter part of his state of humiliation, leaving his disciples, in his farewell discourse to them, (St. John 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 Chapters) a most effectual medicine against it. Now the chief point insisted on herein, is his promise of sending the Holy Ghost to his disciples, whom also he calls the Comforter, because he drives away all fear of man out of the heart, filling and overflowing the same (which bare reason cannot do) with a stream of life and power.

Therefore, let him that would be a follower of Christ in truth, read and consider this with due application; and then with full assurance accept of, and rely upon, this his promise, and with filial freedom

freedom and confidence pray to Christ to make it good unto him. And verily, if we do bear reproach for his name's sake *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us.* And since Christ himself is so near to them who suffer for his sake, that thereby they become habitations of God, upon which the glory of God resteth, yea, which are filled with the Spirit of glory and of God; should we not, when tempted to fear man, be strongly moved thereby, to resist the temptation with all our might, and stedfastly believe that the power of God will be perfected in our weakness? And what a comfort is it, that the Spirit himself *helpeth our infirmities?* Yea, and *maketh intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered?* That is, most powerfully, and in a manner altogether inconceivable by human reason: he being our continual advocate in heaven, and in the council of the Holy Trinity, bequeathed to us by Christ, as long as we continue orphans in this world. Nay, Christ himself, who is at the right hand of God, ever making intercession for us. O that we were thoroughly sensible of the joy and readiness lodged in the heart of God, to support all those who, seeking all their help from him alone, rely wholly on his paternal goodness! How easily then should we get rid of the fear of man, and even blush for shame, that we had ever been diverted by it from any good undertaking!

8. But all these means will nothing avail, if we consult in any thing with flesh and blood, or with other fearful men. As soon as ever therefore we desire to be made free, we must either wholly forsake these persons, and avoid all conversation with them, or at least use it so far as absolute necessity requires, with the utmost caution and circumspection. Many have undertaken a good thing in readiness of faith, but while they did not set about it immediately, without conferring with flesh and blood, but first asked the advice of this and another friend, they gave over the design, and stifled the gift of God that was in them. Indeed it is not to be expressed how many useful designs are by this means

means hindered and laid aside. Doubtless we ought not to rely too much on our own prudence, or to slight the advice of experienced men; but we must beware too of the other extreme, of *being tossed about with every wind of doctrine*. For it is a good thing, that the heart be established; which stability is obtained by faith, but is easily lost again by the fearful talk of those who have little faith.

9. On the contrary, let us confer with the holy Apostles, and observe the unusual earnestness, where-with they labour to free every one that nameth the name of Christ, from the fear of man. Would you know with what weapons they armed themselves against it, *as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*? Why they took unto them the whole armour of God, and so were able to withstand in the evil day. And thus may you gain the victory, which you will never be able to obtain by human weapons, such as wit and learning.

10. Indeed, not only the writings of the Apostles; not only all holy writ, from the beginning thereof to the end; but heaven and earth, yea, and all the creatures of God, would assist us, would we consider them with a believing heart. Doth not our Saviour, to reproach our idle fear, send us even to the sparrows for better information? *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father*. Nay, he directs us to the very hairs of our head, saying, *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*. Elsewhere, he takes the grass of the field to witness against our little faith: and all this to expose our horrible unbelief, and to represent to us in a clear light, that a man by faith becomes the most glorious, and by unbelief the most base and miserable of all creatures.

11. Stand fast therefore, as becomes those to whom are made all those glorious declarations; *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*; which plainly alludes to Exodus xix. 34, where we find these emphatical expressions of God—*Ye have seen what I did unto*
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the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you to myself.—Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. For all the earth is mine: and ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

Now, not only Israel after the flesh, but all the people of God have a right to lay claim to, and comfort themselves with all these his glorious promises? And to what purpose did he make them? Was it not to assure all his servants, that none, how powerful soever, should be able to hurt them, as long as they continued faithful to his covenant? Nor is it possible for the whole world to hurt one that entirely relies on his promises. For he who trusts in God, doth by this faith so unite himself to the power of the living God, that thereby he becomes much stronger than the whole world, whether visible or invisible.

This precious promise of God, concerning the royal priesthood of his saints, was confirmed and sealed by the death and blood of the Son of God. *Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth, hath loved us, and washed us from our own sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.* Let every Christian then demonstrate himself to be one of these royal priests, by breaking through all difficulties, into a true cheerfulness of faith, which he is willing to give to all, without respect of persons; by fighting manfully the battles of the Lord, and pressing on for the prize of his high calling!

Let every one that hath by baptism begun to renounce the devil and all his works, entirely dedicate himself to the service of the Lord of Hosts: let him deeply consider, with how high and holy a majesty, with how great a Monarch (*who indeed is the only Potentate*) he hath entrusted his soul and body; and no more fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Let him think with himself, how secure he is under the protection of so great
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a King. *He dwelleth in the secret of the Most High: he abideth in the shadow of the Almighty.* But let him also duly consider, that he is not to fight this combat by his own strength; but that the Captain of the Lord's Hosts, delivering his own sword to him, will arm him with his own power, and say unto him, as he did unto Joshua, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong, and of good courage; be not afraid; neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.*

In fine, renew thyself daily in the spirit of thy mind, and draw life and nourishment from the word of God. Stir up thyself in prayer, and strengthen thyself with the company of other faithful Christians; since where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is Christ in the midst of them. Thou oughtest to stir up the gift of God, the child-like cheerful spirit always, and without intermission, even as a fire, by constant blowing, is kept up to a flame. Press toward higher degrees of faith, by pondering the promises of God, and continually exercising thy love to thy neighbour, with all singleness of heart, to the uttermost of thy power, wherever God giveth thee opportunity. For nothing conduces more to the increase of faith, than a continual exercise of it.

And if a man knows himself to be naturally bashful and fearful, let him with the greater earnestness assault this enemy, and labour to keep a conscience void of offence, lest his natural fearfulness grow upon him. Let him have a care, in the beginning, not to make himself the slave of other men, especially of them that are in high places, but behave himself always as a faithful servant of God, in all discretion and humility. Or if he have at last fallen short, let him the more now encourage himself in God, to obey him henceforth rather than man; not suffering himself to be any more shaken, either by force or subtilty. He ought to lift up his head in the power of Christ, though under the hardest combat, and greatest poverty of spirit:

spirit : and to make the glory of God his whole and sole end, in all he does or leaves undone. Blessed is he that thus standeth his ground in all combats and assaults; he shall go from faith to faith, from strength to strength, and finally, overcome and inherit all things with Christ.

C H A P. VI.

Of Christian Discretion.

1. **A**S flesh and blood is commonly inclined either to exceed or fall short in matters of duty, so it is easy, while we avoid the fear of man, to run into presumption, rashness, inconsiderateness. Therefore it is necessary that we be continually on our guard, that so our boldness may be ever tempered by wisdom; that wisdom I mean which cometh from above, and is called by St. Luke, *The wisdom of the just*. And so St. Paul stiles it, the spirit of a sound mind; *God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love; and of a sound mind*. For indeed, one Spirit works all this in man; and through him again in others: making him not only discharge his duty with undaunted courage, and giving him a pure desire to promote nothing but the glory of God, and the good of his neighbour, but enabling him also, in all his doings and sufferings, to behave with divine prudence and wisdom. And if any lack this wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him. It shall be surely given him who continually keeps a watchful eye over his own spirit; who is ever humbling himself in the sight of God; and, like a helpless infant, praying to God for discretion and understanding, and taking the word of God for his constant Counsellor.

2. Where this foundation is laid, we need not fear any hurt from the boldness of faith. And though perhaps, for want of experience, it may
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not always be exerted in due time and place, yet are we to take heed, as soon as we are sensible of it, not to be too much dejected for this imperfection; but to praise God, who therefore shews us our failings, that we may mend them, and who will himself supply what is yet behind. And whenever we observe such failings in others, we ought to be particularly cautious how we judge them. For God will not judge according to ours, but according to his own mind; and *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he hath often perfected praise.*

But hereby we do not in the least reflect upon any one, who, from a long experience in the ways of the Lord, doth in the spirit of love, mind his brother of the failings which have overtaken him in any of his actions. By this he doth not stifle any good that is in him, but rather prunes the good tree from its superfluous, irregular shoots, taking care of and having an eye over it, that it may bring forth its fruit in due season.

3. And that we may be assured of so doing, we must, before all things, consider, that there is no true faith, without repentance, so neither can there be any true boldness of faith, unless a man exercise himself daily in it. For the undauntedness of faith, is no such groundless rashness, as is found in a wild soldier: but it is the fear of God, which having taken possession of the heart, expels the fear of man; and where the spirit of man is truly humbled, and broken under the mighty hand of God, there the Spirit of God dwells and exerts itself so gloriously, that there is no room for the flesh to boast. Let no man deceive himself. There is no true faith, without holiness of heart and life. Whatever is separate from this, cannot last long, be the appearance of it ever so glorious.

4. Again, the true boldness of faith is known, by its continually working by love. By faith a man is made a lord over all; but by love, a servant of all. By faith he is a king; but by love a spiritual priest, ministering, not lording, in Christ's sanctuary. Now when a man doth not abide in love,
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but is swayed by anger, hatred, or the like, and perhaps breaking out in scoffing, railing or bitterness, he must not pretend to boldness of faith: and though he may have had some degree of it before, it is now corrupted and lost. Therefore in this case, a man ought first to humble himself before God, and when he is sincerely renewed in the spirit of his mind, then to press on again in the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love.

5. To keep up this boldness, we must continue in prayer, and in child-like communion with God: for by this, the mind is best guarded from vain excursions, and inspired with meekness towards all men. And whoever, by humble, fervent, and constant prayer, labours after a stricter union with God, will not only be fortified against all precipitancy and hastiness of spirit, but also against tempting God, of which men of little faith are particularly careful to caution him.

6. Neither does his boldness of faith at all interfere with the obedience which inferiors of every kind owe to their respective superiors; only remembering, that we are never to pay any one so unlimited, blindfold an obedience, as to prefer the authority of man before the clear command of God.

This caution is highly necessary; there being but too many, who think they act entirely in faith, when indeed they are only following their own fancy, without any warrant from the word of God. And this distemper is the more dangerous, the less remedy can be applied to cure it. For those that *walk in the light of the fire of their own kindling*, if they are advised to true humility, discretion, and obedience, are apt to suspect that it proceeds from a design of lording over their consciences; and that all the advice given them, is no better than the fruit of unbelief and the fear of man. They think themselves happy that they do not adhere to men; without taking notice how deep they are enslaved to themselves. But he is truly wise, who humbles

himself more and more, and is always ready to submit to all men. For where humility is, the enemy finds no room for his most dangerous temptations.

7. Let us then continually join the exercise of daily repentance, the denial of ourselves and of our own wills, of true humility, obedience, submission, prayer, of the meekness and patience of Christ, of hearty love for our brethren, and compassion for their failings, and other virtues that flow from the wisdom which cometh from above: let us, I say, join and knit all these together with the cheerful exercise of faith and trust in God. Let us excite one another, with comfortable words, to cast off all fear of man. Wheresoever God hath wrought a good will, let us take heed of damping it in any of the least members of Christ: but let us cherish it by the word of the gospel; and by the rules of true christian discretion, keep it within such bounds, as may bring it to a fuller and more substantial maturity.

C H A P VII.

Of the Good which ariseth from the Boldness of Faith, conquering the Fear of Man.

1. **T**HE eleventh chapter to the Hebrews lays an ample foundation for reflections on the glorious effects of faith, and on that power of God which hath at all times so exerted itself in true believers: but here it will be necessary to bid you take heed of making God changeable, by saying with the unbelieving world, "This indeed has been done formerly, but now miracles are ceased." For by this false maxim, suggested from the bottomless pit, the highest dishonour is thrown upon the living God, all his promises are made void, all the examples he hath set before our eyes are absolutely useless and impertinent; yea, and all his calls and allurements to active faith, are rendered null and insignificant. And whereas, in truth, we have
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none to blame but ourselves, for not treading in the same footsteps of faith, in which the saints of old walked, and consequently for not seeing the glory of God as they did, we hereby cast all the blame upon God, and desire a difference of times; whereas the difference, in reality, lies not in the times, but in the persons.

For though it cannot be said, that every believer now must do the very same works that were done by *Abraham* or *Moses*, yet ought every one to follow the faith of these holy men, and to exert the same with full power and energy, in that state and condition wherein God hath placed him, and in those circumstances that daily offer; and in so doing he may be fully assured, that he (as well as they) shall see the glory of God. And with such a heart and mind are the scriptures to be read, and the examples and glorious effects of faith to be considered; that so we may receive strength and holy boldness, more nearly to unite ourselves with God, and to enjoy his infinite love and faithfulness in a more ample and abundant manner.

2. Now because faith, though it be so high and precious a gift of God, is not commonly esteemed according to its dignity, it is the more needful to observe, what the Scripture throughout teacheth, that all the good which was ever wrought in the world by man, was done by faith, whereby men are so united to God, that *All things are possible* to them. Wherefore it is highly necessary, with all plainness and earnestness, to represent, not only to the world, but to the children of God too, that Faith is something far more glorious than Reason can conceive or express; for till a man is sensible of this, he is utterly unable to comprehend what an inestimable treasure it brings with it. But when once he comes to know that it is the substance, *ὑπόστασις*, the ground and bottom of things hoped for, whereon, as an immoveable foundation, all the inconceivable goods we hope for, do rest, and an *ἔλεγχος*, or convincing evidence and testimony of the Spirit, which assures beyond all doubt
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of things not seen: I say, where faith is thus known and felt in a man's heart, then he sees the advantage of that faith which overcometh all fear of man, and is of so large a compass, as to contain all, and more than all we can ask or think.

For then he discovers, that it is faith which delivers a man from all evil of soul and body, and on the other hand puts him in possession of sovereign bliss, and fills him with the fulness of God: yea, and that whenever (either in the Old or New Testament) he would perform any thing great and glorious, he hath always employed those whom faith had set free from the slavish fear of man: a single man, setting aside the fear of flesh and blood, and going forth in the name of the living God, hath frequently saved a whole nation. And what was more remarkable in the Apostles, at their beginning to preach the Gospel, than their great boldness, at which the High-Priest, Scribes and Elders stood amazed? And for this reason they are set before us as examples, teaching by the victory of their faith, to confess Christ before all men without fear, and bear his cross, that we may partake of his glory!



F I N I S.